

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

The specification, including the abstract, has been editorially revised in order to place this application in better condition for issue.

Regarding the objections to the drawings, the specification has been revised to mention the reference sign 4A, thus overcoming the objection under 37 C.F.R. § 1.84(p)(5). The objection under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) is respectfully traversed. The rake/reach adjusting mechanism is shown as element 6, and the rejection in this regard is therefore unfounded. Note also paragraph [0009] in the specification. The rake/reach adjusting mechanism is not described in detail, inasmuch as such mechanisms are conventional and well understood in the art. Given this, the rejection of Claims 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, is unfounded. § 112 does not require a detailed description of well-understood, conventional structures.

Turning to the merits, and without acceding to the rejection of independent Claim 1, on Asayama et al. (EP 0 718 172 A1), Applicants have amended this claim to incorporate the subject matter of Claim 2 in an effort to advance the prosecution (Claim 2 having been cancelled accordingly). Claim 1 has additionally been amended to refer to a central collapsible steering shaft for better conformity with the description, and to recite that the central bearing tube is slidably mounted in a bore of a second tube of the upper column assembly. Note the arrangement of elements 11 and 9 in Fig. 3.

The rejection of Claim 1 contends that Asayama's element 11 corresponds to the central bearing tube of Applicants' invention. But it is apparent that such an interpretation of Asayama is inconsistent with the invention as particularly defined in Claim 1. Note, for example, that Claim 1 recites that the central bearing tube (the first tube) rotatably supports the central collapsible steering shaft at a lower end of the bearing tube. Note the arrangement of rotary bearing 10B and bearing tube 11 in Fig. 3 of the drawings. Asayama's element 11 constitutes part of a steering shaft and thus cannot

properly be equated with the claimed central bearing tube, which surrounds a steering shaft.

The secondary reference to Connel (U.S. Patent No. 3,788,148), which was cited in connection with Claim 2, fails to overcome the above-discussed deficiency of Asayama with respect to Claim 1.

Claims 8-14 have been added to provide more comprehensive protection for Applicants' invention. As to independent Claim 8, Asayama and Connel are deficient for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to Claim 1. However, note also the recitation of a machined bore and the slidable contact of the peripheral surfaces at lines 7-10, as well as the arrangement of first and second rotary bearings at lines 10-13.

In view of the amendments and remarks presented herein, Applicants respectfully urge that the outstanding rejections be withdrawn.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this

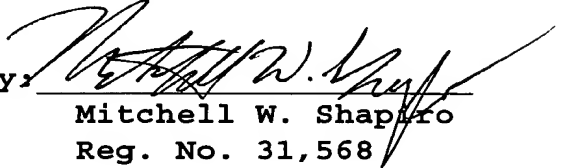
paper and has not been requested separately, such extension
is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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August 6, 2003